

THE SURE PROGRESS OF GRACE

PSALM 92:13-14

Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing.

I KNOW not whether it hath ever struck you, with the importance the subject merits, the beautiful order, which is observed, in the great plan and economy of human redemption. It is difficult indeed to know which to admire most, the astonishing mercy displayed in the act itself; or, the perpetual grace and goodness, manifested in the carrying of it on, from day to day, in the heart of him, who is made the happy partaker of it.

God hath no less consulted the comfort, than he hath the interest of his People, in that the same grace, which was displayed in forming redemption, is unremittingly exercised, to establish and confirm it. And certainly one of the highest felicities of the mind, is to watch the leadings of grace, and trace its progress, in the various operations of it continually.

It should seem, as if the gracious Author of so much mercy, thought it not enough, to make the renewed soul truly happy, in teaching him, that the eternal interests of the Lord's people, are lodged securely in the Lord's Hands, and that all the covenant-

engagements of Jehovah, are with the Person of our Almighty Mediator, as Trustees of this Covenant; but God opens besides this, another source of the sweetest enjoyment, in leading him to the view of the operations of the Holy Spirit in the heart, and ripening the seeds of grace planted by his own Almighty Hand, by the daily fostering care of his own Almighty power, and carrying the whole on, by the various evidences of his love through the course of time to eternity. This sums up the contents of the Holy volume, which he puts into our hands to peruse, and which when fully read and understood in the heart, gives that joy, which is very properly termed *unspeakable and full of glory*.

A train of observation like this, may be well supposed to arise in the mind, from the words of the text, as well as the many precious things, belonging to this golden psalm, from whence they are taken.

It is entitled a *Psalm*, or Song for the *Sabbath* day. And what more sweet, or more suited, for the service of the Lord's day, than the celebration of the Lord's praises? what more likely to awaken, every becoming frame towards God, than when recounting the faithfulness of God? we certainly take the most effectual method, to excite under the blessed Spirit's influence, a trust in a Covenant-God, for *future* blessings, when we look back, and take a review, of his *past* favours. And while grace is in exercise, how are we more likely to promote *prayer*, than by approaching a mercy-seat, with *praise*?

But without entering into an examination, of the whole beauties of this sweet psalm, the text alone will be found to contain so many in itself, that I fear we shall hardly find time,

within the limits I must observe to unfold to your present view, all that it contains.

The Holy Ghost, in order to convey his divine truths to the mind, hath been pleased to make us of a great variety of metaphors, to answer this purpose. As the Great Teacher in the school of Jesus he is for ever sending his people, to some image, or figure, in the wide field, both of nature, and art, the better illustrate, and explain, his doctrines of grace. And seems indeed, if one may presume to say so, to have ransacked, all the kingdoms of vegetable and animal life in order to arrest every faculty of man, that nothing might be wanting, to convey right apprehensions, of the important truths of salvation.

Among the many methods of this kind, which he hath been pleased to adopt, in borrowing illustrations, from art, or nature, to explain divine things by; the idea, of *planting* mentioned in the text is more than once made use of in the holy scriptures, and as it is a very common, and well understood process, and not more common, than beautiful, the Holy Ghost seems to have more frequently adopted it.

He compares the people of God to *trees of righteousness*, planted not in the usual place of fields, or gardens, remote from constant observation, but brought into *the house of the Lord*, where they are sure to be always in view, and to be both sheltered, and flourish in so highly favoured a soil. And contrary to nature, (for the whole work is grace) they are said to increase, with increasing years, and to be most luxuriant, when from age they might otherwise be expected to decay. *They that are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of*

our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing.

There is a vast degree of beauty in this figure, when analyzed, and highly descriptive of what it is designed to convey, of the blessed operations of grace in the heart.

Those trees are said to be *planted*, not grow spontaneously, but planted; for *nature*, in its loveliest production, and before grace hath formed it a new stock, is in itself, a degenerate plant, and grows only, in the world's wide wilderness; where like *the heath in the desert, it knoweth not when good cometh* (Jeremiah 17:6). And which, if it bear fruit, it is only the fruit of *the vine of Sodom and of the fields of Gomorrah, whose grapes are gall and their clusters bitter.* (Deuteronomy 32:32)

Moreover; those trees, are not only trees of God's own planting, taken out of nature's common, but they are brought into the sacred inclosure of God's house. That is, they are brought nigh the divine presence, and live under his continual favour. It is sweetly said, by the Lord himself, concerning his vineyard of old, in allusion to this happy state; that he had *fenced it round, and gathered out the stones of it* (Isaiah 5:2) intimating, that he had so surrounded his people with his constant protection, that nothing from without, should hurt them, and by taking away their stoney hearts, nothing from *within*, should obstruct their fruitfulness.

And thus all true believers, like trees taken from the wild wilderness of nature, and planted in God's own house, are brought into a state of high cultivation, and may be said, from the plentiful supply of ordinances, and continual manifestations of the divine presence, to have the Summer's warmth and the

Autumn shade, the clouds, and the dew, and the rain of heaven, dropping their fulness and fatness upon them.

But what is most striking, and particularly meriting our notice, in this sweet figure of the text, because it is altogether descriptive of the work of grace, and perfectly foreign to nature; is the flourishing state of those trees, in advanced age. For this is wholly supernatural. In the common operations of nature, everything is progressive. After the season of maturity is completed, barrenness, and corruption, must follow. But in grace, the trees of God's right hand planting, are said to be most fat, and flourishing, when nature is decaying. With God's people, the sweetest fruit, is in old age.

Their last days, are their best days. And to use another similitude, like the setting sun, some fair evening, whose orb of glory, appears to be magnified to the view, and its beams more abundantly shining with gold, when sinking beneath the horizon; so the dying saint, sometimes spews forth greater accessions of grace, manifest stronger and sweeter evidences of the life of God in the Soul, and from long experience of God's faithfulness, affords in his latest moments, more precious testimonies of the liveliness of his faith; than in any other former period of his existence.

Think of this, my aged Fathers, in the house of God! and when health, and strength, and friends, and life, and all are decaying; beg of God, that a growing acquaintance, in the covenant love and faithfulness of the Lord, may give you increasing confidence, to bear stronger, and fuller testimony, to the truth as it is in Jesus. This will be indeed, to bring forth fruit in old age, when from the refreshments of grace, in your *own*

heart, you are enabled to refresh all around you. And surely the most desirable of all deaths, must be the dying, as you have lived; hanging upon the promises, and by faith realizing heaven, even before entering upon it Oh! what a glorious testimony is it in those latter ages, when we see a dear aged saint of the Lord manifesting like the Attraction of the magnet, that the nearer he is approaching, to the object of his desires the Lord Jesus, the stronger his soul is drawn towards him; and thus increasing longings, and increasing dependence, in *his* faithfulness, are hourly emptying the soul, of all that is its own, and filling it with all that is from above. And at length when the moment comes, he dies, as it is said that *Moses* did, upon the very mouth of the Lord, and sweetly falls asleep, in the bosom of Jesus.

The subject proposed to our Mediation, from the words of our text, will be found I hope, under the divine teachings, generally profitable. Nothing can convey instruction more, to God's own people, who are already brought by grace, into the sacred plantation of God's house, than to see the security, which they possess therefrom, and the assurance of flourishing which they are promised in advancing years.

And while this view, may serve to shew them, from whence all their fruitfulness must be derived, our subject if commissioned by the Lord, will no less be useful, to convince some uncultivated mind present, that unless they are gathered out, from the original stock, of a corrupt nature, and become planted in the house of the Lord by grace; *their root will be as rottenness and their blossom go up as the dust*, (Isaiah 5:24).

In the prosecution of this subject, I shall have only to follow up, the beautiful order, which the sacred Writer hath observed, in

first speaking, of that state described by *planting*, in the Lord's house; and then *secondly*, the sure effect of fruitfulness, springing out of it. The text therefore forms its own, arrangement.

I only stay to beg of God, at our entrance upon the subject, that *both* classes of hearers, before whom I speak, may be benefited by our review of it. That while *some* come under the transplanting hand of God, and are gathered this day from nature's wilderness, into his courts; *many more*, may find evidences, as we prosecute the path of enquiry, to manifest, that they are personally interested in the doctrine, and that precious scripture, is proved to be their portion; *They shall be called trees of righteousness the planting of the Lord that he might be glorified.* (Isaiah 61:3)

First then, let us attend to the important doctrine, conveyed to the Church, under this figure of *planting*.

The Scriptures, are full of the most beautiful imagery, and seem to have studied a great variety in this particular, by way of illustration on this point.

An union with the Person of the Lord Jesus, as the Great Head of his Church, being the sole means of a participation, in all the gifts, and graces, which flow from his person, to his people; it became necessary, that the truth should be clearly explained, in order to afford the more lively conviction of it. Hence it is said, that the true Believers in Christ Jesus by the operation of the Eternal Spirit, are incorporated with him, as branches are in a Vine, They are united to him, as living Members in his mystical body. They are ingrafted upon him, as the graft upon a rock. They are built upon him, as upon a

foundation stone; and they as lively stones, are growing up *to an holy temple in the Lord, for an habitation of God through the Spirit*. They are married to his Person, by his assumption of our nature, generally considered; and by the Spirit's work in the heart, personally applied to every individual, they are consequently entitled, to all the benefits of, the union.

I make use of all these figures, (and they are all taken from scripture) in order to illustrate, the whole extent of the doctrine, which they are intended to convey. And you may observe, in the variety adopted, how the sacred Writers, have endeavoured to make up for the deficiency of one image, or figure, by the substitution of another. For as the idea of planting, doth not carry with it, that change of nature in the plant, which is wrought by grace, in the heart; under the image of engrafting, is included, the doctrine of conversion also. And hence, true believers in Christ, are thus represented, as not only brought out of nature's wilderness, and planted in the courts of the Lord; but in the accomplishment of this great work, their nature is regenerated, and they are formed anew, in Christ Jesus. So that being engrafted upon him, they derive all their life and moisture; and fruitfulness, from him. They enter into a full enjoyment, of all that soul-enriching communion which such a nearness, and unity may be supposed to induce. From him, (as an Apostle speaks) it is, as from the Head, *all the body by joints and bands having nourishment, ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God*, (Colossians 2:19)

And as these wonderful effects, wrought upon the human mind, are all necessary, in order to form it, for God's plantation; so they individually carry with them, the marks, by whose sovereign power along it is, that such supernatural deeds are

wrought. Indeed, the very idea of being planted, conveys at once a full testimony that the thing acted upon, must be altogether passive, in the act. For, if true believers in Jesus, like plants, grow not in their first, and natural soil, it can be no other but God, who brings them out of it, and plants them in his own house.

The Apostle *Paul*, hath illustrated this act of sovereign grace, with his usual elegance under the metaphor of a Tree, wild by nature, and grafted contrary to nature, into the true stock. *Thou* (says the Apostle speaking to the Gentile Church, whom God had brought into his garden) *wert cut out of the Olive tree, which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature, into a good Olive Tree.* (Romans 11:17)

No image, could have been more happily chosen, to represent the state of our fallen nature, than that of an Olive Tree, let to run wild, and uncultivated, and exposed to be the prey of every beast of the wilderness. And nothing could at the same time more strikingly demonstrate, that the recovery of such a degenerate plant, must be the result of the sovereign power, and goodness of God; than by the strong figure of cutting out from this corrupt tree, and engrafting into the good tree. For the act not only exceeds the ability, but the desire, and even the consciousness of its necessity in man! It is all in opposition to nature's bent, and contrary to all nature's inclination.

To drop the figure. Every man both from original, and actual corruption, sadly indicates, that his state, is not simply ill, in this, or in that, particular, feature of the mind, but the mind itself, the very *stamina* is altogether so. it is a rottenness at the core. The heart is corruption.

Perhaps my Brother, you have never considered the subject in this point of view, and therefore, may not so readily enter into the clear apprehension of it. But if God the Holy Ghost, shall graciously condescend to be your teacher, you will then discover that there are no images, or figures, strong enough to represent the real state of the case, of man in his unrecovered, unrenewed nature, before an act of grace hath passed upon the soul.

His *understanding*, is all darkness. His *mind*, enmity against God. His *will*, uniformly rebellious. All the *affections* disorderly. In short, the *whole heart*, with every passion originating from it, *deceitful and desperately wicked*. And as these are the etchings of character, in man, so are they of every man, and of all men. They form indeed, the family feature. It is but to draw the picture of a human being, in his present fallen state, and these must form the outlines of his person.

And hence; the wonderful change, when accomplished by almighty grace in the heart, is expressed by corresponding characters. The *understanding*, that was once darkness, is now said, *to be light in the Lord*. The *mind* that was once enmity against God, feels a constraining love to him. The rebellious *will* is brought into captivity, to the obedience of Christ. The *affections*, which were all engaged on the side of sin and corruption, are now influenced by the spirit, to the fruits of all *goodness and righteousness and truth*. In a word, God gives a *new heart* and with it the whole man is changed. *Old things are passed away. All things are become new.* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

These are the sweet effects of being gathered from the original state of nature, and being brought into a state of grace;

or to use the similitude of our text, being taken from the waste, and barren wilderness, and *planted as trees of righteousness in the house of the Lord*.

And what a blessed testimony, to the truth of this doctrine is it, when the heart of any believer finds a previous correspondence to it, in his own experience. When you can look back, and see, what you once was, and as thankfully look up, and contemplate, what you now are. When the soul is conscious, of being gathered, and planted, into the Courts of God, from the perpetual supplies you receive from the Lord, as the communicating head of all influences.

Blessed be God, there are some, and that some I trust, not a few, who are as conscious, of drawing all their flesh springs from Jesus, as the streams, depend upon the fountain, or the rays of light, upon the Son. They are not more sensible, that the animal life, is supported day, by day, by the sustenance derived from the bread that perisheth, than the spiritual life of their soul, by the sweet supplies of grace, which they derive, from their living head.

But if there be no union with Christ's person, there can be no communication in his gifts. Planted the soul must be in the Lord's house, and ingrafted in the true Vine Christ Jesus, or no fruit can be brought forth unto God. The text limits the blessings it promiseth, and common sense limits them also, to this precious implantation. It is they, and they only, which are planted, in the house of the Lord, that are aid to flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age, and shall be fat and flourishing.

Shall I beg of you, to pause one moment over this part of our discourse, before we go on to what was proposed under the second branch of it, that every one may make it a subject of diligent enquiry; whether this blessed operation hath passed upon his mind?

Are you anxious my Brother, to know your state in this matter? The point is easily ascertained. A change of soil, to the plants of nature, is not more visible, than a change of heart, when accomplished, is manifested from the work of grace. They that are planted in the house of the Lord, soon indicate, where they have taken root. They long for the manifestations of God. They are as sensible of his presence, or absence, as the tender productions of the garden, are conscious of heavenly influences.

The sweet communications which pass, and repass, between a gracious soul, and a more gracious God, do, as decidedly testify, when grace is in exercise, and when it is not, as the varied seasons of day, and night, in the natural world, manifest the change. And the sensible growth which is promised in the text, though not found in equal degree in all; will yet in some certain proportion, according to the measure of grace imparted, demonstrate, those which are within, the sacred inclosure, from those which are not.

Are you sensible, my Brother, of any of these things? Do you know any evidence in your own experience, of the transplantation from death to life? Are you acquainted with those vehement desires of the soul after God, which *David* speaks of; as *the thirsting of a dry land where no water is*? Can you describe, the different states of divine communications,

from the contrary, in your own instance; and do you know what it is to enjoy the light of God's Countenance, and what to mourn after it, when at any time, suspended, as a soul that waiteth for the Lord, *more than they that watch for the morning*. (Psalm 130:6)

These, and the like enquires, if closely applied, in a serious hour of examination, will soon enable any man to discover, what, above all things he is most highly interested to know, whether he be truly interested, in the promised blessing of our text, by having experienced the work of it previously exercised on his heart. Let me once more repeat, before this branch of our subject be dismissed, that an *union* with Christ's person, is indispensable to a *communion* with his graces, And when this is accomplished, all the sweetness and fulness of that blessed Scripture follows; *Because I live ye shall live also*. (John 14:19)

I shall proceed now, to the second point which I proposed from this subject, namely, to shew the sure effects of fruitfulness, springing out of the former.

Indeed, nothing can more decidedly manifest, that believers are in a state of vital union, with their Almighty head, than when they are growing up to him in all things. For this denotes that they live under his immediate influence.

There is a beautiful order, in the Spirit's work, upon the heart, and which if truly gracious souls would keep more in view, their comforts would be greater, and their confidence more unbroken. When once the Holy Ghost hath brought the soul into this sweet union, with the Lord Jesus, there is a constant life of receiving out of his fulness. The very life indeed of the soul is in Jesus. It is no longer kept up, than it is preserved in him. The stream doth not depend more upon the fountain, neither the tree

on the root, than the regenerated soul doth, upon the life-giving Head. Consequently therefore the effects of that life, in whatever way it be manifested, is in him. And hence all supplies, essential to preservation, must be constant, unremitting, perpetual. As the branch, never ceases to receive sap, and moisture, from the Vine, to which it is united, and by which it is kept alive; so the believer, never remits one moment, deriving resources from *Him*, who is the life of the soul, and who by way of explaining this precious affinity saith, *I am the vine ye are the branches*.

And what makes this life of dependence, so very sweet and interesting is, that God the Holy Ghost, whose gracious office it is, from first, to last, to carry it on, is continually exercising the soul, by its wants, to seek resources. It is He, which reveals to the believer his own necessities, and the Redeemer's fulness, and then brings him to Jesus, for suitable supplies. So that by thus constantly living upon him, the believer is daily increasing, in grace, in knowledge, in obedience, in love, and in affection, to the Person, and character of the Lord Jesus. Nothing can tend more; to keep the soul humble, than a daily sense of its own wants, and insufficiency. And nothing will endear the Redeemer more to the heart, than his daily, hourly, supplies to the soul, of all its necessities. And thus, when God the Spirit, hath accomplished this blessed purpose, by his divine teachings, and induced this spiritual frame of waiting on the Lord, in a constant dependence upon him, the believer experimentally feels somewhat of the spirit of the Apostle, *to glory in his infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon him*. He literally rejoiceth in his own emptiness, that it may afford occasion, to taste the sweetness of being filled from Jesus. And however paradoxical

it may seem to the world; when he is most weak in himself, then is he most *strong, in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

This is then, in the language of the text, to flourish in the courts of our God. This is to bring forth fruit in old age, when nature's root, is more and more decaying. This is to *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* For grace is an humbling principle. And the soul that *grows in grace* is growing downwards. That is, lays lower and lower, in the dust before God, in token of profound humiliation, in the discovery of greater insights of his own corrupt, and sinful nature. And as he advances, in the knowledge, of his Lord and Saviour, he sees more of his beauty, more of his fulness, and suitability, as a Rich Saviour, exactly formed for a poor Sinner. By growing in grace therefore, he grows more out of love with himself; and by increasing in the knowledge of his Saviour, he becomes more enamoured of his Person and Character. And thus the blessed Spirit teaches him to know, both himself; and what Jesus is, that he may be filled *with all the fulness of God.*

My Brother. Have you been thus taught of God? Are your advances in grace of his kind? Be assured, that there is no other to be depended upon. Men may fancy what they please, of inherent holiness in the creature; But these things result, not from divine teachings, but are the puffings up of human pride.

Do not forget this one thing. The distinguishing office of God the Holy Spirit, is *to glorify Jesus.* Now it never can tend to glorify Jesus, when we exalt the creature. And what can tend to exalt the creature more, than when we tempt him to fancy, that he hath in himself, somewhat of holiness to look to. When we

send him to duties, and ordinances, and the exercise of his gifts, and graces, by way of recommending himself to God.

The Spirit's teachings, are all the reverse to this. He shews the sinner, that the same Almighty hand which first stripped him of everything he fancied holy, and the led him, naked as he was, to Christ to be clothed, now leads him daily, as naked as ever, to Jesus, to be covered with his robe of righteousness. The same grace, which convinced him, that he was empty, and brought him to Jesus to be filled, teaches him like the *Israelites* in the desert, that the living bread, of which their *Manna* was a figure, must be again supplied, pure and new, every morning. And the same blessed Instructor, that made him come empty handed, and bringing nothing but his misery to recommend him, still tells him, that he hath nothing, literally nothing else to bring, but the same recommendations.

Oh! these are sweet and precious lessons, in God's School. I pray God, that you, and I, may learn them, more and more, from our great Master. Depend upon it, he that stands highest, in the upper form, of his *heavenly* teaching, is he, that hath made the greatest proficiency, in this humbling science. And were I in possession, of all the learning in the Universe, and the knowledge of every art and science, centered in my person; gladly would I relinquish the whole, were it possible by the sacrifice, to acquire a greater depth in those *two* grand rules of the divine life. To know my own total emptiness, and Jesus' all-sufficiency. And by the Spirit's operation to be unceasingly living upon his fulness.

But while I am speaking, of the blessedness of those, in whose experience, the promise of the text is daily fulfilling; and

who from living more, and more, upon Christ, flourish as they advance in old age; I must not forget, that very probably, there may be, some mourning souls present, who from not finding this progress in their instance, are tempted to call in question, every principle of their faith, and to doubt whether they have ever been brought in, as, plants in the Lord's house, My Brother! Do not in your anxiety, overlook those evidences, however small you may think them, which carry in their bosom, the truest marks of a work of grace in the soul. Your very fears, and anxieties, prove the reverse of what you fear. else why those distressing apprehensions of coming short of grace? Wherefore those longing desires after grace? Why is it, that you sometimes rejoice, upon the smallest gleam of hope arising in the soul, and again fall back into your former despondency, when that hope is clouded? Must there not be grace in the heart to desire, even though those desires, be not according to your wishes gratified?

Moreover; Say, is not the Redeemer very dear to you, as a Redeemer to his Church, and People, even though, you cannot see *your* interest clearly in him? Is not his Person, altogether lovely, and his gifts, and graces; most desirable, however short you yourself come in evidences, that you are united to the one, or have communion with the other? And faint, and indistinct, as the impressions of hope are upon your mind; of a personal interest in Jesus, and his offices; tell me, would you, or could you, give them up, with an indifference, as one that hath no right in them? Do my Brother, examine yourself, by these standards of character, and I venture to believe, that you will find precious testimonies, where you least expected them.

Besides; It should be remembered also, that Believers in the Church of Christ, like plants, do not, neither are they expected

to flourish, with equal strength, and fruitfulness. The distribution of spiritual gifts, we are taught, are diverse, though all coming from one, and the self same Spirit, *who divideth to every man severally as he will*. The church at *Thessalonica* flourished so abundantly, as to call forth a particular thanksgiving to God, from the Apostle *Paul* upon the occasion. *We are bound* (says he) *to thank God always for you brethren as it is meet because your faith groweth exceedingly*. On the contrary, the Church among the *Hebrews*, made so little progress, that the same Apostle told them, they had need to learn, *the first principles*. But as Churches both, we may be very certain, there was a progressive improvement, though not in an equal degree.

I will be very ready to confess to you, that, nothing can be equally desirable, to the soul; as the increasing with all *the increase of God*. But while grace prompts the soul, to desire this more and more, the same grace, doth as earnestly teach the believer, to be thankful for what he hath.

Satisfied by the evidences given, that you are truly brought, into the courts of the Lord's house, and united to Christ Jesus, as a branch in the vine; bless God, for such distinguishing mercy. And while in humble waitings, in the appointed way of ordinances, you are seeking; an increase, from the Lord, do not overlook, nor *despise*, (for we know the Lord doth not) *the day of small things*.

Recollect also, that it is in grace, as in nature. Though the branches of the tree, are not all equally lofty, or equally luxuriant; yet the humblest, and the lowest bough, if really a part of it, is as much nourished, and sustained, from the root, as the strongest, and the highest. And is not that a sweet reflection to

the soul, that Jesus' care is peculiarly exercised, over the low, and the weak, and such as from their situation are more, immediately exposed to danger? To use another beautiful image of scripture; while he feeds his flock like a Shepherd *in the day that he is among his sheep, to seek that which was lost, and to bind up that which was broken, and to strengthen that which was sick; he is said, to gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in this bosom and gently lead those that are with young.*

I have been so very diffuse, in the illustration of the doctrine of the text, in the opening of my discourse, and have so generally incorporated the practical inferences arising out of it, as we have gone long, that there will be less reason for detaining you, with any length of application in conclusion.

I dare not indeed, consistent with the duty of my office, of supplying some portion for every one in the congregation, I dare not shut up the subject altogether, without dropping a word to such of my audience, as at present feel themselves uninterested in the blessed promises of the text, because they are uninfluenced in the doctrine of it.

Very obvious it must be, without my remarking it, that if the great mercies of a state of flourishing, and fruitfulness, spoken of, as belonging to God's house, are wholly depending upon the event of being planted there; unless this act takes place, neither can be found. It were a folly to look for the effect, without the cause. And the alternative is awful indeed. That solemn declaration of the Lord Jesus upon the point, is a volume; *Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.* (Matthew 15:13)

Shall I beg of you therefore my Brother, from a conscious sense of the vast importance of the thing itself, to look diligently *lest you fail of the grace of God*. Never forget, that the most plentiful ordinances, void of this life-giving power, are all nothing. The rain, and the dew, and the clouds fatness, drop in vain, on rocks and sands.

Gracious God! accomplish thy great work of conversion, (if it be thy blessed will) in the hearts of some who hear me this day. And now before *the axe is laid at the root of the tree*; before that awful sentence is gone forth, *cut it down why cumbereth it the ground; let that precious promise to Israel of old, be their portion; Bring them out, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary O Lord which thy hands have established*. (Exod. 15:17) Then will they be called *trees of righteousness the planting of the Lord that thou mayest be glorified*. (Isaiah 61:3)

Suffer me to add, for the encouragement of the faithful, that I trust in God, no faint, or thirsty soul, will depart, without knowing his personal interest, in the sweet promise of the text, and having as feelingly received their accomplishment, in his own experience.

Your very wants carry with them this life of dependence; and on whom shall the faint rest, but upon the strong, or where shall the thirsty be filled, but at the fountain head? Every exercise of grace leads the soul to Jesus, and the more necessitous your circumstances are the stronger should be the motives to live upon his fulness. Go then my Brother, go unto Jesus. And take with you this one observation, as a never-failing truth,

answerable to all exigencies; Whatever brings you closer to him, must be a blessing, however disguised it may be in a covering of sorrow.

There is more space in the heart, to be filled from the Infinite Creator, when the creature is most emptied. And the preciousness of Jesus, will be best known, when the soul hath literally nothing else left, that is precious. A Believer may, and I hope doth, sometimes feel the grace which is in Christ Jesus, when his blessings are multiplied, upon him. But depend upon it, the sweetest season for the soul, to say as the Prophet did, *Yet will I rejoice in the Lord I will joy in the God of my salvation, is when the fig tree doth not blossom, and the fields yield no meat.* (Habakkuk 3:18)

May that sweet promise be fulfilled, as it may be required; *I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.* (Jeremiah 31:25)